



unicorn

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UNICORN is published quarterly by the students of Loyola College. Subscriptions are \$3 for one year; students and alumni, \$2 for one year.

All submissions must be accompanied by SASE, and all are eligible for cash prizes. Shorter fiction is preferred, and no more than five poems per submission. We ask that you also include a brief biographical note.

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Luke 1:28

Early, alone, at the steep well,
Mary lowers the jar
Through damp dead weight darkness;
And with sleep on her breath
Toys at a tune, tamps it
Into the dark
Milling around the brick well-wall,
While the jar is filling,
Cool in darkness.

The tune dissolves in a shiver.
Hands grafted to the rope,
She drops under the flash
Fever of the trauma,
Her acquiescing womb,
Cupped in the flesh,
A caught womb: a marble font, coolly
Taking the hushed onslaught
Of the holy.

---William I. Elliott

Winter Birth

Flat on her back in the trampled straw,
its stems poking through her ragged skirts and shawls
the peasant woman has stuffed a corner
of her dirty sleeve into her mouth,
smothering groans. (If she is heard and found
there will be trouble.)
Pain stretches and bubbles through her groin,
cracking her belly.
Her husband crouches beside and over her,
his hands mopping the drip of sweat
down her neck, into her ears.
Her thick brown hair is tangled in straw.
Between pains she pants into the donkey-warm air.
Tightening, she clenches teeth and hands,
willing the screams down her throat.
At last in impossible dragging pain
the baby comes wailing into harsh starlight,
quickly hushed by his father shaking a tattered gray shawl
free from dirt and muffling the baby within,
jiggling him gruffly to silence.
"Our son," he says quietly, holding him out.
The mother lies beast-hopeless, eyes overflowing with misery.
As well wrap him for burial, as for the life he'll have.
Nonetheless she reaches limply up
and cradles him.

---Carol Sickles

Faulkner

White-haired little man,
Red-coated popinjay with riding crop,
Good sour mash your choicest diet,
Why wrench your words into such shapes?

Your life avoided complex ways:
You sought simple things like riding crops
And raising hell with drug-store boys
To Mississippi's boldest mash.

It doesn't square:
Your books keep torturing
The simple words to make them true.
They complicate, they complicate.
The tales are simple like your hunting yarns,
You torture them onto the page
To give them life and make them true.

Was yours the demon of complexity
To exorcise into your books?
Were these the ghosts you sacrificed
To bring simplicity to heel,
The price we pay for your own truce
Against the chaos we can't see?

---Dave Dougherty



Enough

December
waiting out front
for a ride
after a friend's call
he sees warm light inside
thinks
how cold out here

He listens
the highway's hollow echo is alive
an expanding sky
this thin air whooshing to the vacuum
blowing stars--
dark sparkling play that lasts
until the sun rolls calling
a full blue day

They're late
but he likes
waiting in the open
walking back and forth

He stares
at bloodless stars
imagines
blue and swirling planets
with nights
as combustible
as coal black as this
specked with these
same lights
rearranged
coldly firing
other round
bound dreamers

As the lights turn him
and the car slows down
he remembers

The need for
empty winter nights
was thick as uncut grass
at summer's end

---Jack Holmes

On the Way to the National Gallery

where I-95 funnels to the bay floor tunnel, the traffic thickened like sludge. Ahead, large and dark as a truck tire flung loose to the pavement, lay a dead cow, its broken neck crumpled beneath its body, its eye staring madly at the sun. And from the highway's embankment like a row of spectators, three munching cows stretched on the grass, while a fourth wandered among the slow-moving vehicles as in a herd. Then bodies, wierdly contorted, came one after another.... until, ahead, I saw a red pulse of light beating hideously beside the jack-knifed wreckage of a cattle truck, its cab crushed like a bucket. A siren whined above the scattered glass, and from their broken cages, the trapped cows bellowed pain and terror.

All day I stalked in silence among the Old Masters. I thought of a friend who, with a human skeleton strapped next to him, drove from Baltimore to the University of Maryland, his hollow-eyed companion smiling all the way. And I thought of the world hauling, as down a dark highway, its cargo of bones.

---Paul Lake

An Elegy for P.T. Barnum

sobbing clowns took you down
from your cross:
the wooden arms of your dream;
they wrapped you in the bitter tongues
of elephants--
& the ostriches pawed like
nervous horses at your bier;
now the synchronized watches
tick like tents in the rain
they will bury you
piece by piece
in music boxes
where the ballerinas
dance with matchstick partners
& a moon derails
like a circus train
over your grave.

---Jesse Glass, Jr.

Hospital Impressions

I. Bacterial Endocarditis

Downing this self-styled puppeteer,
He whispers tenderly
into my soul's ear:

Human! (says He)
Who's in control here--
you, or Me?

II. The Nurse's Shoes

As in the morning I listen
early in the quiet, the nurse lumbers
down the endless empty hall.

(The nurse's name is Shannon.
Her name is beautiful.
Her skin is onyx-black
peering through stiff white cotton...)

The nurse's shoes are orthopedic.
They go flop-squeesh,
flop-squeesh on the sleek tile
as she slumbers by.

III. George

Probably long ago,
after a hard day's work in sunbaked fields,
the farmer's son picked up his girl
in a battered work-truck;
probably they drove around a lot, laughing
and finally parked
on a soft starlit lawn
by a gentle river...

Probably he never thought then
that he would come to this:
straps and bars and catheters,
blank staring walls,
imagined relatives in the hall;
a blubbering sack of bones and senility
that shrieks fear and pain
in the cool hospital nights
and moans abandonment
throughout the sunless days.

---Mike Schultz

discovery

my flanneled lad scuffed down the stair

towards christmas

unaware

i ribboned his tricycle

wrapped his teddy bear

while he hugged the wall:

metallic talismans reverberating my shiny smiles

broke

splintering silvery lies

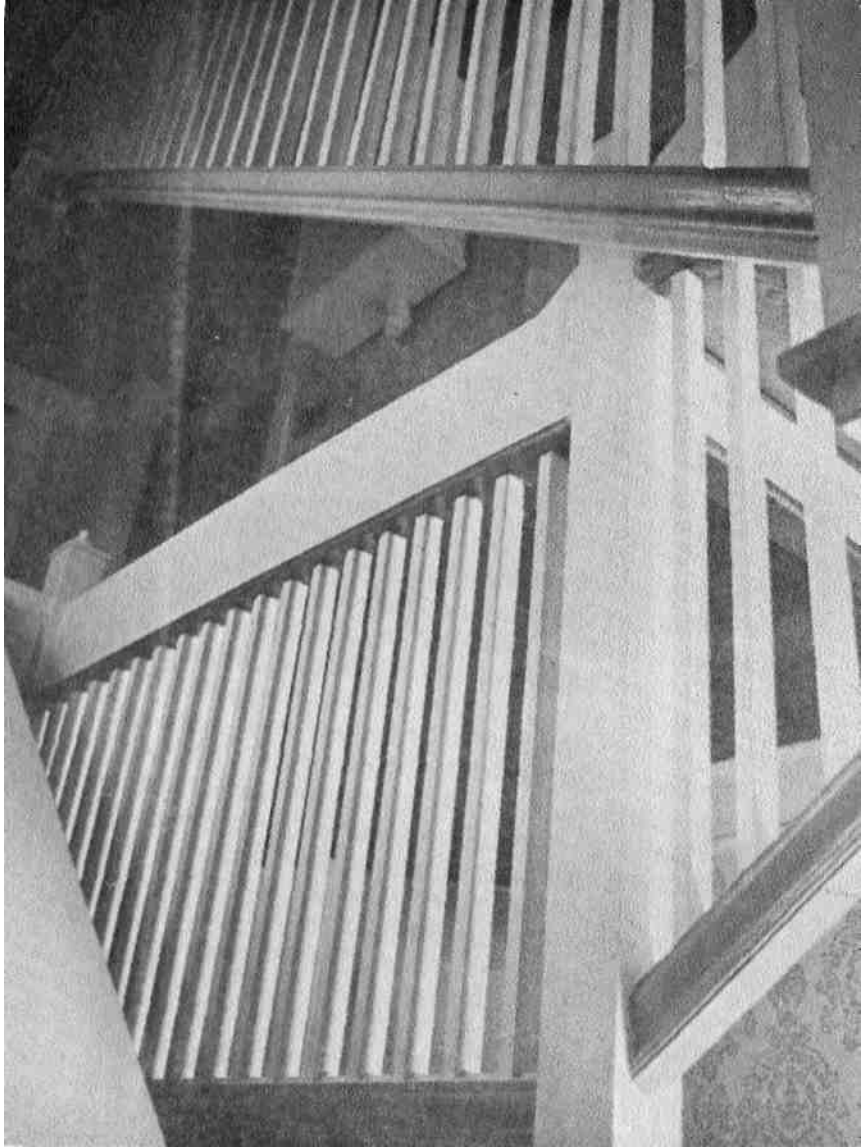
when i saw

his emerald eyes rippling red

as he crawled back up the stair

brandishing a velveteen reindeer

---vicki aversa



A runaway fire truck plunged into a bustling crowd of holiday shoppers at the intersection of market and Sixth Streets...Three persons were killed, three critically injured...firemen washed away blood from the intersection which was strewn with eyeglasses, shoes, handbags, clothing, and a smashed pair of crutches...A witness said: "All of them were just blown away. They looked like puppets."

---from an Associated Press release

In the department store window
a group of mechanized marionettes
sings carols silently
while one hangs a wreath again and again
never changing his mechanical smile
or nod or step up the ladder.
Another sits in a sleigh
and whips mute smiling horses hundreds and hundreds
of times a day, goes nowhere, smiles.
Children on sleds ride down cotton banks,
their mittens and boots pulling off
every time.
They do this every day of the season.
They do this every year.

Along Market and Sixth, there is
traffic, music, laughter

sirens
 the shearing of metal the engine thing barrels up
 (some people quickly cross themselves
 their gesture is a signal--)
 The engine mounts the curb
 and like a behemoth bites at the pedestrians
 (Human forms flying like leaves or bits of paper
 or nonessential parts of life thrown off
 nail, and horn, and hair, and shell)
 Screams and Mother Mary still the siren
 Smoking blood
 blood has burst forth and poured away
 The tableau is
 frozen in dreams
 the driver is caught behind
 the huge snarling steering wheel;
 he stares from his disadvantage point
 as the tool of safety and life
 becomes as soon a thing from hell
 The firemen stiff in the
 hosing away of blood, saying
 it can not be blood it can not be blood
 The scenario:
 eyeglasses broken away from empty eyes
 shoes and handbags flung about, a bargain
 basement clearance sale on street level
 the shattered crutches, the broken legs
 of a marionette
 let heaven and nature sing

---D.R. Belz



The Synagogue

---D.J. McReynolds

Somewhere along the road old man Markowitz had lost his faith. They had taken his business and his home, and they had taken his wife and their daughter and their two sons. They had taken him, too, of course, but they had not killed him and he had not died. Afterwards he was a displaced person. He lived in Johannesburg for two years, but there was nothing for him there so he tried Argentina for a while. And now he was here, living in a little town in northern Arkansas, never quite certain even in his own mind how he had come to arrive in this place.

He missed his faith. He would tell himself sometimes that if he could only find a Synagogue somewhere and a rabbi and a few other jews to talk to, to pray with, maybe he could get it back. But there were no Jews in town and the nearest Synagogue was in Little Rock or Joplin and who has the money for going those places?

This town had accepted him, or at least had not refused to accept him. He rented a little two-by-four store on the Courthouse Square and sold candy to the school children and cigarettes and tobacco to their mothers and fathers. He lived in back of his store and made enough money to pay his rent and utility bills with a little left over for bread and potatoes and maybe a little salami or a new pair of socks.

They were nice to him at the Public Library and since, after all, he was alive he considered himself practically well-off. But Sam Markowitz missed the faith of his fathers. He didn't mean to be bitter, but he had seen so much of man's inhumanity. So he read books from the library and sold candy and cigarettes and ate potato soup. After a time the children ceased to notice his beard and the funny way he talked.

And certainly nobody bore him any ill-will here; especially not the nice old gray-haired librarian, with her greeting of not too many days ago:

"Good evening, Mr. Markowitz," she had said, and then added, "and Happy Yom Kippur!"

"Please?" He couldn't believe it. The Day of Atonement was not supposed to be happy.

"I said Happy Yom Kippur," she repeated, a little embarrassed now. "I noticed today was Yom Kippur, and I---"

"Oh," said Sam. "Thank you, kind lady. So! A Happy Yom Kippur to you, also."

"Thank you," she said, and Sam took his book and wandered, still a little puzzled, back to his store.

Such people! he thought to himself. He even almost smiled. Well. The Day of Atonement was here and he had not known. He had lost track of so many things during the years through which his only problem had been to endure. After supper that night he tried to pray.

Before going to bed he dug down into the bottom of the old steamer trunk that served him as bureau, and found an old, worn prayer shawl that someone had given him once. He couldn't remember if it had been in Johannesburg or Argentina. That was the trouble these days. Sometimes he couldn't remember and sometimes he couldn't forget. But anyhow, wherever it was there had been Jews. Maybe he had even prayed, then.

But tonight. Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement. He tried to think of things to atone for, to be sorry for; but the only thing he could be sorry for was the whole world, and he was too old and too tired for that. He tried to say the words, but all he could remember was that other place, that other time.

"Sammy, Sammy," they had told him. "With your brains you could be a rabbi. Do you know this, Sammy? Why don't you use what God has given you?"

"Brains!" said Sammy. The smart young boy in the comfortable home did not think he wanted to be a rabbi. He wanted to get ahead in this world; that was what he wanted to do with his brains. Let Davey Goldman be a Rabbi; this was not for Sam Markowitz.

So he got ahead in the world, and then the world fell apart so Sam used his brains to stay alive. Nothing more, thank you, just alive.

And now, very carefully, he folded the shawl and put it back in the trunk. He took his library book and sat down in the hard, straight backed chair near the floor lamp and began to read. He allowed himself one cigarette each day, but tonight he did not smoke. This far he could go, but no further.

In the last rush toward Christmas Mr. Markowitz envied his fellow townspeople. He didn't want to, but he couldn't help it. They had their churches and their pastors and their Santa Clauses in store windows. The music shop two doors up from Mr. Markowitz regaled the ear with carol after carol all day long and in windows up and down the square the toys and the special gifts and the fancy lights all told him how

much he was . . . well, out of things.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Markowitz!" The children said it on the last day of school when they came in to spend their pennies and nickles and dimes.

"So!" said he. "For you, a Merry Christmas also," and he would put in an extra lemon drop or a few more jelly beans.

"How come you haven't got any candy canes?" asked one little dark haired girl and he had to admit he didn't know from candy canes.

"But next year," he promised her, "By Markowitz will be plenty candy canes. For this year have a nice piece bubble gum, yes?"

"Thank you, Mr. Markowitz," she said, "and Merry Christmas!"

Such people! And poor old Sam Markowitz, if he gave away too many extra pieces of gum or candy, it would mean he could not even have salami for Christmas. Well, no matter. He was alive, and who needs salami?

The dark haired little girl had reminded him of somebody. His sister, maybe, or his daughter. Or his cousin. One day there had been a little dark haired girl like this one, and they had been at home. It was a fine, clear winter afternoon such as this and there were coals sparkling in the fireplace. His mother played the piano and his elder sister and his uncle played cello and violin while his father listened and he, Sam, read Schiller and - he was Bar Mitzvah that year or the year before - sipped brandy from a little glass.

The girl - it must have been his cousin, he decided - wanted to taste the brandy and he told her, "Go help in the kitchen, child; this is not for you."

"No, Sammy," said his father, "maybe it should not be for you, either. The good things are for all of us in this world, boy, not for this one or that one." And his father had taken the glass and emptied it back into the crystal decanter. Sammy pouted.

"Someday, Sammy," said his father, "Someday, God willing, you will have a wife and children. Then you will punish your fine son a little, and you will not be angry so much."

Or maybe it hadn't been that way at all. Maybe it was his own children to whom it had happened, and he had said it to his son instead of his father saying it to him. Or maybe it had been both. Well, no matter. It was a long time ago, anyhow, and who has brandy now? But the little girl with the dark hair lingered in the old man's mind. The day of the brandy they had eaten a fat roast goose for dinner and there was a small, morocco-bound book on the window sill. The sun had shone brightly on it.

Oh, well, he smoked his cigarette and read from his book and after a while he went to bed. Just before he fell asleep he remembered that the book had been green actually and it was only the bright sunlight that had made it look red for a moment.

He didn't mean to envy them. After all, he was alive and there were potatoes in the bag and salt in the box and the business was good. Lots of men bought cigars by the box now, and many of these same people insisted that Sam allow them to buy him a cigar. Such a luxury it was! By Thursday, the twentieth of December, Sam had seven cigars in his trunk. He would have had nine, but two of his benefactors had insisted on lighting their gifts for him on the spot.

"Merry Christmas!" they would say, and he would reply "Merry Christmas," and smoke the cigar during business hours and so not to get the full pleasure he was anticipating from the seven.

These men had their cigars by the box. Four customers had confided to him that they were buying the cigars for their pastor, or ministers, or priests or whatever they called them.

"You are a good man," Sam would say. And in his heart his soul cried out in anguish. They have their churches! They pray! But where was a Synagogue for old Sam Markowitz to go to and--with God's help--to find his faith again?

In the terrors he could never have lived without it; and now the terrors were over and he was living without it. And which was the greater terror?

On Friday, Sam stayed open later than usual. The whole square stayed open late the last two or three days. But the library closed at seven, so Sam shut up his little store just in time to walk over to return one book and take out another.

He walked through the square, up Ash street two blocks, down Elm past the Methodist church with its neat red brick parsonage alongside and its lovely life sized Nativity Scene. It was cold for the first time that year and there was just a hint of snow in the air.

"Merry Christmas, lady," he said to the librarian.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Markowitz," she answered, smiling.

"Lady," he said, "since you will not be open now for a while, may I take two books this time?"

"Of course, Mr. Markowitz," she said, "of course. What a question!"

And so he took two thick volumes that night,

one of Poetry and one of history, and he looked forward to them comfortably as he walked homeward. It was beginning to snow now and Mr. Markowitz was thinking about his seven cigars when he found his Synagogue. He hurried home, found his prayer shawl, and hurried back to it.

In the Methodist parsonage, the Reverend Mr. James Gordon stood up and yawned and stretched and smiled to his wife.

"I think I'll go over to the church and check the thermostat," he said. "The choir will be here at eight thirty."

"All right, dear," she replied, and smiled back at him. He put on his hat and a heavy jacket and went out the front door. He was surprised to see an old man sitting on the ground, tailor-fashion, in front of the Nativity Scene. He was even more surprised to see that it was Sam Markowitz.

"For heaven's sake, Mr. Markowitz!" cried the minister. "What on earth are you doing?"

The old man looked up at him stonily. "Praying," he said simply.

"Well go inside the church, man," said Mr. Gordon. "You'll freeze to death out here!"

"So who's a Christian?" For a moment some of the bitterness began to edge back into the old man's face. He gestured with his shoulder toward the Virgin, her Husband, and the Child. "If a few Jews want to pray together Jo they have to get a license or something?"

The two men stared at each other in agony and then the old man's face softened.

"Look, Rabbi," he said, "you want to do me a favor?"

"Sure," replied the trembling Gordon. "Sure, Mr. Markowitz. What?"

"So. You go back to your nice warm house, then, and wait. When I finish here"--again the shrug--

"I can come in and have a nice cup of coffee maybe, or even. . .even maybe a little glass brandy? We could talk a little bit? In the warm house?"

"Why. . .of course." said the Reverend Mr. Gordon. "That would be fine, Mr. Markowitz. . .Sam. You just come whenever you're ready." He turned and stumbled blindly back toward his front door.

"Janet!" he called when he got inside.

"Yes, dear? That was quick."

"Take the car quickly, please, and get down to a liquor store and buy some brandy."

"What did you say, dear?" For fourteen years she

had loved this man and honored and obeyed him, but in fourteen years she had never been sent on an errand such as this.

"Liquor store," he said. "Brandy. Right away."

"But dear... the choir...?"

"Oh, blast the choir!" said the minister. Look, dear, an old friend is going to come by in a little while and I think he might want a glass of brandy. Just do it, please, and I'll tell you when you get back. I want to put some coffee on, and I have to be here when he arrives."

"Certainly, James," said Janet, and she went to do it.

Outside the snow was falling faster, but Mr. Markowitz and his friends did not mind. Together they spoke, with one voice:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God."

Tour

& on your left we have
there on your right bu
ilt the prince, take p
ictures through the wi
ndow as he wears the o
riginal authentic tomb
was built impressive n
ow you see the ancient
restored & this is whe
re we hope you enjoyed

---Elliot Fried



Elegy for Father

I

Mother says I have your hands
and your lips.
I don't know. I forget but

I remember your broad hands passing
through my hair: easy
powerful and heavy warm. I remember the long
slender fingers, the deep
ivory lines, the bulging purple veins.
I remember we fished
you, mark, and I on the river
your big hands on my sides
casting, casting and
suddenly a jerk a
sunny fish
flapping and jerking on the line
then in your hands, your broad warm hands
holding the spastic fish and its blood
running down your fingers and under your nails.
Father, I remember your hands remember
them counting pills in your drug store like
so many moments I remember
them wave
good bye hello good bye

And your lips, Father, I remember your lips
thin, red, parting sympathetically
to speak to a customer or wiggling
with laughter while telling uncle ned

a joke or tremoring with a whistle
 breaking wide and gaping
 a yawn or a call to dinner or
 a quick, angry scolding twitch
 on your lips I remember
 them leaning down
 gently, gently
 to touch
 my forehead
 soft
 goodnight

Your lips I remember,
 Your hands I remember, Father,
 I have them stored in mine.

II

My grandfather said that on the morning my father
 died
 the rose bush outside his kitchen window
 bloomed and
 burst with brilliant
 red flowers.
 He said he remembered my mother's call.
 He said he remembered
 his eyes going bleary
 red and seeing the red petals on the roses blur
 brighten
 and bleed red as wine.
 Your blood

Your body
 inside the room
 I couldn't bear to see
 Your hands like pressed butterfly wings

flat against your chest or
 Your lips pursed insensibly together I couldn't bear
 to see those artificial roses
 putrid white, fluffed
 around your face
 I couldn't bear
 my eyes tight and tingling
 I cried
 I cried before your body in the room
 because my hands, my hands!
 mother seeing them came to me taking
 my fluttering hands in hers
 kissing my trembling lips.

III

This is my mourning prayer for you Father.

Each mourning I wake and walk softly to the temple
 and kneel to pray
 to God who recieves both the quick
 and the dead.
 Like you Father, my hands go silently together
 my lips form prayers;
 Likewise the sun rises, roses burst
 And I accept that bread Father, that wine Father
 into my hands (the holy ghost)
 onto my lips (the holy ghost)
 onto my lips
 stuck on the words
 "Our Father who art in heaven
 Our Father who art in heaven
 Our Father, Our Father..."
 Amen.

---Joe Gainer

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